



CITIZEN GUIDE TO THE NEWARK BUDGET

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Newark is a big, complex financial institution. Every year it raises and spends hundreds of millions of dollars. The money comes from taxes, fees and fines, state aid, utility bills, the Port Authority, and a variety of other sources. It goes to operate city government--to pay police officers, firefighters, and inspectors, for instance--and to fund Newark's contribution to several other types of government--the Newark school system, Essex County, and the sewerage commissions, most notably. How this money is raised and how it's spent affect everyone in Newark.

Who's in charge of these hundreds of millions of dollars? Ultimately, you, the citizens of Newark, are in charge. You exercise your control by electing a mayor and city council who make many crucial decisions and select the administrators who make the rest.

The goal of this booklet is to help you do your job as a citizen and voter better. Being able to understand better how the city's budget and finances operate should help you make your voice heard, select elected officials, and hold them accountable.

The booklet begins with short sketches of the major ways that the city government raises money ([section A](#)) and spends it ([section B](#) and [section C](#)). Then we look at how the budget gets balanced--the rules about property taxes--and what revaluation does ([section D](#)). [Section E](#) examines the problems that arise when plan and reality diverge, and the mechanisms that handle these problems. Finally ([section F](#) and [section G](#)), we examine the procedures for budgeting in Newark--the timetable the city is supposed to follow, the opportunities for citizen participation, and some ways the process could be improved.

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